

Do you want to earn between £18,000 & £30,000?

Have you thought about a career in commercial horticulture?

Commercial horticulture - the growing of plants for commercial purposes
Food crops - fruit, vegetables, salads, herbs, grapes for wine-making
Flowering plants, trees and shrubs for gardens/parks; fruit trees

Crops are either grown in the field or under protected conditions, in glasshouses or polytunnels

CASE STUDY



NAME

Jamie Sanders

ROLE:

Top fruit farm worker [and gamekeeper], Loddington Farm Ltd, Linton, Maidstone, Kent, (a leading top fruit business producing apples and pears for supermarkets).

QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY:

Agriculture or land based skills diploma / apprenticeship plus experience. (I have a Foundation Diploma in Gamekeeping).

IS TRAINING GIVEN?

Yes – continuing professional development training, from forklift truck driving to spraying courses, first aid, health and safety and pest control.

WORKING LIFE (WHAT DO YOU DO?)

I usually start work at 7.30am, finishing at 4pm. At peak times when fruit is being picked, particularly during September and October, I finish later, between 5pm and 6pm.

Generally I work outdoors, in the orchards and in the fields, or in the farmyards. When I first started my job, I did all the tasks from fruit picking to pruning and tractor work, so I had an overview of how the farm should work and so I can explain it to others. My working life varies with the time of year, although I spend much of my day driving a tractor. The tractor is used to transport fruit from the orchards to the cold stores or the packhouse. I also drive the tractor when spraying, hedge cutting, mowing or cultivating/ploughing. In the spring, I am often involved in planting new orchards. Occasionally I might be asked to remove (or grub) old trees. Other machines that I use include a telehandler and a fork lift truck which we use to shift heavy loads and boxes of fruit.

When the weather is really wet, we do routine maintenance tasks on the farm buildings and machinery.

In addition, I use my gamekeeping skills when looking after a small shoot on the farm, rearing the game birds and making sure the environment is good for them.

SKILLS AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

An interest in farming, good practical skills and physical fitness are useful. Confident in the operation of machinery, reliable, flexible, able to work in a team or alone. Decision-making skills, organisational ability. Mathematical ability is useful when calibrating sprayers, for example, estimating the length of time that a task may take or calibrating machinery.

DID YOU DO ANY WORK EXPERIENCE BEFORE JOINING?

Yes. While at school I gained experience working at an open garden attraction. My tasks included maintenance and management of the garden and woodland. I did everything from weeding to coppicing the woodland. Then at the age of 16, I attended Plumpton College, in East Sussex, where I studied a Foundation Diploma in Gamekeeping [www.plumpton.ac.uk]. I undertook weekend gamekeeping work at Loddington Farm Ltd, near Maidstone, as I lived nearby. When I finished College I was fortunate to find a job at Loddington Farm Ltd and I have been here for three years now.

ROUTES INTO HORTICULTURE

Routes vary but a good education is useful. Previous experience of working in horticulture may prove useful. Apprenticeship schemes available for over 16s. Some roles require study in Higher Education. See www.lantra.co.uk/careers